

# **THE MARINE CORPS PLANNING PROCESS**

## **COURSE INTRODUCTION**

*“Those who face the unprepared with preparation are victorious.”*  
—Sun Tzu

### **Course Overview**

This instruction is designed to enhance the warfighting skills of future commanders and staff officers by helping them develop a common understanding of Marine Corps doctrine in the realm of operational planning.

The planning process presented here was developed under the MAGTF Staff Training Program and was signed into doctrine in the form of MCWP 5-1 on 5 January 2000. The Marine Corps Planning Process is used extensively by Marine Air Ground Task Forces (MAGTFs) specifically by the Marine Expeditionary Forces (MEFs). The process focuses on the MEF’s primary role as a warfighter. Additionally, the process principally covers the following:

- Operational design
- Top-down planning and decentralized execution
- The single battle concept
- The role and function of G-3 future operations
- The use of the six warfighting functions as a key element in the future operations planning process

The format for this course allows students to experience education similar to that provided to MEF command elements. The combined instruction of the paper-based course and the interactive multimedia instruction (Web/CD-based IMI) enable students to explore the development of a MEF operational plan in the Joint and multinational environment. We will study and apply each of the six steps of the Marine Corps Planning Process (MCPP)—Mission Analysis, Course of Action Development, Course of Action War Game, Course of Action Comparison and Decision, Orders Development, and Transition. Additionally, this course will introduce Intelligence Preparation of the Battlespace (IPB).

The practical application used in the IMI portion of the furnished compact disk (CD) and in the seminar (for those seminar students) enhances the learning process by allowing each student to work through as much of the process as possible within the constraints of a distance education environment. The scenarios, used in both the seminar and the IMI, reflect a MEF as the Marine component of a Joint Task Force (JTF).

### **Course Objectives**

Each lesson has a unique set of educational objectives that falls within the course objectives listed below.

- Evaluate an operational/tactical situation set in a Joint and multinational operational environment and synthesize a MEF-level operations plan (OPLAN) using the MCPP.
- Analyze the requirements and products of the MCPP.
- Understand how to create and use the following planning tools:
  - Modified combined obstacle overlay (MCOO)
  - Doctrinal template
  - Situation template
  - Event template/matrix
  - Decision support template/matrix
  - Synchronization matrix
  - COA war game worksheet
  - COA comparison decision matrix

### Course Organization

The Marine Corps Planning Process 8805A course is organized as follows:

<b>Lesson</b>	<b>Reading Hours</b>	<b>IMI Hours</b>	<b>Total Hours</b>	<b>Page Number</b>
Lesson 1: Marine Corps Planning Process (MCPP) Introduction and Overview	3.5	1	4.5	1-1
Lesson 2: Mission Analysis & Intelligence Preparation of the Battlespace (IPB)	3	2	5	2-1
Lesson 3: Course of Action Development	1	2	3	3-1
Lesson 4: Course of Action War Game	1	2	3	4-1
Lesson 5: Course of Action Comparison and Decision	1	1	2	5-1
Lesson 6: Orders Development	1	0.5	1.5	6-1
Lesson 7: Transition	1	0.5	1.5	7-1
Capstone Review Exercise (IMI)	0	2.5	2.5	--
Final Examination			2	--
<b>Total</b>	<b>11.5</b>	<b>11.5</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>--</b>

## Student Requirements

Each lesson lists the educational objectives below a header labeled, "Student Requirements." It is essential that students fully understand the requirements and objectives before taking the course examination.

Below each student requirement is a list of readings, supporting educational objectives, and a narrative summary for the requirement that ties the reading assignments to the educational objectives. **Required readings for each lesson are found immediately behind that lesson.**

A CD is included with this course. The CD contains all the lesson materials and readings found in the course book. The CD is designed to "auto run" when inserted into the computer's CD drive. When the CD starts, you will be presented with links along the left side of the screen that will allow you to select which lesson you wish to view. If the CD does not "auto run," refer to the instruction card included in the CD envelope.

The CD requires plug-ins to be installed on your computer. These plug-ins are provided on the CD.

The CD also contains interactive multimedia instruction (IMI), which is an integral part of the 8805A course.

To take maximum advantage of the combination of paper-based and multimedia products, we recommend that each student view the IMI product **when instructed to do so in the lessons**. You can access the IMI portion of the CD by following the links in the lessons on the CD.

The IMI is scenario based. Included with this course are the following scenario materials:

- Road to War Background Paper
- JTF/MNF Pacifica Operations Order (Operation Pacific Strike)
- JOG (Air) 1:250,000 map of Luzon Philippines (Pacifica)

All these scenario materials are electronically included in the IMI portion of the CD. You will be asked to read, use, and refer to these materials throughout the IMI. You must read these materials to be able to understand and apply the Marine Corps Planning Process in operational environments. A map is provided for additional reference and granularity when you are working through the operational/tactical problem within the IMI. We recommend that you use the map when developing your courses of action and when attempting to understand the courses of action provided by the IMI.

The information you need to master the course objectives is distributed among the **reading assignments**, the **requirement summaries**, the **IMI**, and the **lesson summaries**. The course is designed for you to progress through the information in the order that it is presented in this course book and on the CD.

**\*\* View the interactive multimedia instruction titled “Course Introduction” before beginning Lesson 1**

**\*\* View the interactive multimedia instruction titled “Capstone Review” after you complete Lesson 7**

**Reserve Retirement Credits.** The total number of reserve retirement credits is based on the total number of hours required to complete this course. Reserve officers completing this course are awarded 9 reserve retirement credits.

**JPME Course Summary.** The following JPME learning areas, per Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Instruction 1800.01A, “Officer Professional Military Education Policy,” are contained throughout the 8805A course.

AREA 1					AREA 2				AREA 3					AREA 4					AREA 5			
A	B	C	D	E	A	B	C	D	A	B	C	D	E	A	B	C	D	E	A	B	C	D
	X	X		X	X		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X			X	X				

## Student Questionnaire

Please visit the following Web site (<http://www.mcu.usmc.mil/mcu/Surveys/CCE.htm>) and complete the end-of-course survey. Please comment as the questionnaire instructs. Future changes in this course are based, in part, on your comments and recommendations. Please complete the questionnaire, and remember what really helps for the future are suggestions on how to do things better. As a backup, the examination packet for this course includes a student questionnaire sheet.

## How to Obtain Assistance

Contacting MCI: The Marine Corps Institute (MCI) administers the Command and Staff College Distance Education Program (CSCDEP) for the College of Continuing Education (CCE). Questions concerning the shipping status of program course materials and grade or enrollment status should be addressed to the MCI PME help desk by any of the following methods:

- DSN telephone: 288-2299/0193, extension 303
- Commercial telephone: 202-433-2299/0193, extension 303
- Internet: [helpdesk@mqg-smtp3.usmc.mil](mailto:helpdesk@mqg-smtp3.usmc.mil)

Mail: Marine Corps Institute  
ATTN: Registrar  
Washington Navy Yard  
912 Charles Poor Street NE  
Washington, DC 20391-5680

Contacting CCE: The College of Continuing Education (CCE) writes the curriculum/courseware and exams and provides enhancements to the CSCDEP in the form of local seminars, CD versions of the courses, interactive multimedia instruction, and other products designed to enhance the student's learning experience. In addition, several Regional Coordinators are available for answering questions. Moreover, CCE Course Directors at Quantico, Virginia, are available to discuss any course content issues as required.

Address your questions about course content to CCE by any of the methods below and ask for a CSCDEP Course Director:

- DSN telephone: 278-5446 or 378-4692/3
- Commercial telephone: 703-784-5446 or 703-432-4692/3
- Toll-free telephone: 1-800-992-9210
- Web page: <http://www.mcu.usmc.mil/cce/>

**Note: Unless this courseware states otherwise, masculine nouns or pronouns do not refer exclusively to men.**